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A Comparative Analysis of Politeness in First Encounter Conversations in British English Film and Peninsular Spanish Film

Valerija Sinkevičiūtė¹

Abstract

This paper aims at analysing the phenomenon of politeness in British English and Peninsular Spanish in the first encounter conversations between strangers taking into consideration power and distance, where relevant. I attempted to demonstrate the differences in two cultures as Spaniards are thought to be more direct, while the British seem to be deeply concerned about non-imposition. The data for the analysis were taken from two films: *Love Actually* (British English) and *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto* (Peninsular Spanish), which were analysed applying Brown and Levinson's framework. The results supported my hypotheses that most of the strategies used by Spaniards were those of *positive* politeness, while the British employed *negative* politeness strategies. However, the number of *positive* politeness examples found in British English conversations and *negative* politeness strategies as well as many instances of *bald on record* technique (which were claimed to be inappropriate and almost absent) used by Spaniards revealed new tendencies in the use of politeness in Peninsular Spanish and British English cultures.

Keywords: *negative* politeness – *positive* politeness – *bald on record* – face

Résumé

Cette étude vise à analyser le phénomène de la politesse en anglais britannique et en espagnol péninsulaire dans des conversations de premières rencontres entre des étrangers en prenant en considération la puissance et la distance (dans des cas pertinents). J'ai tenté de démontrer les différences entre les deux cultures. Alors que les Espagnols sont considérés comme des gens plus directs, les Britanniques semblent être profondément préoccupés par la non-imposition. Deux films, *Love Actually* (anglais britannique) et *Va une Ser Que nadie es perfecto* (espagnol péninsulaire), ont été analysés au regard de la théorie de Brown et Levinson. Les résultats dégagés confirment les hypothèses selon lesquelles la plupart des stratégies utilisées par les Espagnols proviennent de la politesse positive, tandis que les Britanniques utilisent des stratégies issues de la politesse négative. Toutefois, le nombre d'exemples de politesse positive trouvé(s) dans les conversations en anglais et les stratégies de la politesse négative ainsi que de nombreux cas de *bald on record* (souvent considérés comme inappropriés et presque absents) utilisés par les Espagnols révèlent de nouvelles tendances dans l'utilisation de la politesse au sein des cultures espagnole péninsulaire et anglais britannique.

Mots-clés : politesse *négative* – politesse *positive* – *bald on record* – face

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Introduction

There has been a great interest in linguistic politeness in the last twenty years (Watts [2003], Holmes [1995], Hickey and Stewart [2005]). This comparatively new area of pragmatics has been investigated from different points of view; thus, many approaches have been suggested, among which Leech's Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies are most widely applied. As Watts [2003: 58-60] points out, in the 1960s – 1970s there were the first attempts to carry out conversation analysis and examine polite behaviour: Grice's Cooperative Principle based on four maxims and Lakoff's Pragmatic Competence. These two approaches had a tremendous influence on the development of pragmatics and the beginning of the analysis of politeness; however, they did not become widely used models. Nevertheless, they served as a basis for the development of new theories and nowadays in order to carry out research on politeness, many linguists apply those elaborated approaches proposed by Leech and Brown and Levinson, which tend to claim for universality [Watts 2003: 62-63]. Alongside these fundamental theories the concept of politeness is applied while analysing favours, requests, gender differences in conversation etc., and comparing the use of politeness in different cultures.

As mentioned above, the two mostly valuable and widely used approaches to politeness are Leech's [1983] Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's [1987] Politeness Strategies. These two theories present different approaches to politeness study, and they both have been applied in numerous studies; however, criticism has also been levelled at them on various bases. Leech's [1983] approach presents the entire phenomenon of politeness in six maxims (*Tact*, *Generosity*, *Approbation*, *Modesty*, *Agreement* and *Sympathy*). Leech pays much attention to the *Tact* and *Generosity* maxims, claiming that the *Tact* maxim is the most important maxim in the English-speaking society, while the *Generosity* maxim, 'the flip-side of the *Tact* maxim' [Cutting 2002: 48], is of greater importance in Mediterranean cultures [Leech 1983]. The limited number of maxims is the main drawback in Leech's approach, since it is possible to add other maxims, e.g. a patience maxim suggested by Cutting or a consideration maxim proposed by Cruse (both discussed in Cutting [2002: 51]).

Unlike Leech's Politeness Principle, Brown and Levinson's model with the central concept of *face* (a wish either to be liked and accepted (*positive face*) or not to be imposed upon (*negative face*)) comprises a great number of strategies, which are used in order to mitigate Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) to save *face*. Brown and Levinson have successfully divided all FTAs into *on record* (direct FTAs) and *off record* (indirect FTAs), further subdividing the former into *bald on record* (clear acts, which most of the time involve the imperative mood [Brown & Levinson 1987: 95] and those produced with redressive action (using mitigating devices as a compensation for an FTA), *i.e.* *positive* and *negative* politeness acts. This rather complex multi-layer classification allows the analysis of the phenomenon of politeness in greater detail since the distinction between numerous FTAs is drawn, which helps to identify a particular FTA and measure the threat posed to someone's *face* more easily. Furthermore, regardless of Brown and Levinson's claim that *positive* and *negative* politeness exclude each other, which is strongly criticised and appears to be false, it is claimed that the very concept of *face* is applicable to many cultures [Watts 2003: 63]. Thus, this approach has been prominent in various analyses and cross-cultural research, which will be introduced in the following paragraphs.

As suggested above, politeness is a central concept in many analyses, namely, on favours, requests, gender differences etc., e.g. Goldschmidt's [1998] article on favour asking, Heinemann's [2006] and Macaulay's [2001] works on interrogative requests and indirectness and gender in requests respectively, Hobbs' [2003] research on gender differences in voice mail messages, Holmes' [1995] thorough analysis of male and female politeness, etc. In

addition, for the purposes of the present research it is essential to point out that much attention is devoted to politeness in cross-cultural research, where in order to present differences in various cultures the scholars frequently apply the concept of *face*.

In cross-cultural pragmatics analyses of the comparison and contrast between English and Spanish cultures are among the most common. Until now a general view that Spaniards use more *positive* politeness markers, while the British give priority to *negative* politeness strategies has prevailed and happens to be supported by many studies (Placencia and García [2006: 24], Ballesteros Martín [2001 :191-192]). The results of the Spanish linguist Ballesteros Martín's [2001] analysis of two direct 'impositive acts: requests and commands' [Ballesteros Martín 2001: 171] show that where Spanish speakers tend to be more direct and preserve their *positive face*, the British show their concern about their individuality and non-imposition, thus choosing to respect the hearer's *negative face* [Ballesteros Martín 2001: 193-195].

More evidence supporting this general opinion is provided in Hickey and Stewart's [2005] research on politeness in twenty-two European countries. It is stated that in a written discourse (Spanish course feedback) the British employ such *negative* politeness techniques as hedging (*perhaps*, the modal *could*), deictic anchorage (e.g. use of the past tense as in *I was wondering...*), non-conventional indirectness and *off record* strategies [Ballesteros Martín 2001: 122-125]. Furthermore, the analysis of a gift-giving situations in Spain shows that Spaniards tend to replace 'thanks' with admiration, personal enthusiasm, praise of others [Ballesteros Martín 2001: 325]. As a result, it can be claimed that in the investigated situations Spanish culture tends to be characterised as *positively* and the British culture as *negatively* polite; however, it should be mentioned that not all of the possible spheres have been researched yet in order to be able to make generalisations and draw conclusions about the use of politeness in the two cultures.

Undoubtedly, there has been much research on politeness as a cross-cultural phenomenon and the majority of it has been devoted to the analysis of some restricted aspects, such as giving thanks, favours, requests, gender differences, etc. However, any thorough cross-cultural analysis of politeness in first encounter conversations has not been presented. Thus, this paper aims at analysing the phenomenon of politeness in British English and Peninsular Spanish in first time encounters (the first conversation between at least two people) between strangers taking into consideration distance and power (the degree to which one can impose upon the other [Holmes 1995: 17]) where relevant. I will examine two films: a British film *Love Actually* (LA) and a Peninsular Spanish film *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto*² (VASQNEP), which have been chosen on the basis of the similarity of genres (both comedies) as well as their representation of each culture respectively, which suggests that they also reflect the use of politeness in those cultures. I will use Brown and Levinson's framework, namely FTAs *on record* without and with redressive action. Following a traditional view on Spanish and British cultures the hypotheses of this thesis are as follows:

- ✓ the English-speaking society uses more *negative* politeness during the first encounter conversations;
- ✓ the Spanish-speaking society tends to apply *positive* politeness strategies in the first encounter conversations;
- ✓ *bald on record* technique is very uncommon in the first encounter conversations;
- ✓ various combinations of the strategies are possible and quite frequent in first encounter conversations.

² *Nobody is Perfect* (English title).

Data and Methods

The data for this thesis were taken from two films: the British film *Love Actually* (further referred to as *LA*) and the Peninsular Spanish film *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto* (further referred to as *VASQNEP*). The films are of a similar genre – both comedies, besides they represent the same period of time, i.e. they were released in the beginning of the 21st century (*LA* was released in 2003, *VASQNEP* in 2006).

Twenty first encounter conversations in *LA* and sixteen first encounter conversations in *VASQNEP* of different length were found and analysed. It is essential to mention that every utterance (whether a full sentence or not, ended either with a full stop, exclamation mark, question mark or ellipsis) was taken as a single unit of conversation suitable for analysis, thus if a person produced three utterances in one turn, those were examined as separate units, but not as one turn produced without interruption. Furthermore, if a particular word or phrase was repeated several times in a row, a strategy it employed was thought to be used once; however, if such a word or phrase was repeated in the same utterance but interrupted by other words, every word or phrase was taken as a separate strategy employed. On the whole, in British English 123 utterances and in Peninsular Spanish 130 utterances were analysed, from which some utterances were previously excluded for they did not generate any interest for this research, i.e. they did not comprise any of the strategies *somehow* redressing the threat to the Speaker's (S) or the Hearer's (H) *face*.

Every situation involving at least one S and H (except for one phone conversation and some other where only the S's utterances were taken into consideration) was transcribed; moreover, where relevant, the distance and power between the participants were indicated. Some Spanish utterances analysed in this study were translated into the English language, preserving the syntactic structure of the Spanish utterances, especially words that indicate particular strategies. Then, other words, phrases and sentences were not translated word for word, i.e. finding an equivalent utterance with the same meaning in the English language. Finally, every utterance, in its turn, was examined using Brown and Levinson's framework [1987: 102, 131] indicating either *bald on record* technique or *positive* or *negative* politeness strategies (also their combinations if relevant).

In conclusion, a quantitative method was applied in order to find out the most frequently used politeness strategies, namely, the statistics in the form of bar charts for the frequency of *positive* and *negative* politeness strategies and pie charts for overall analysis were presented (both British English and Peninsular Spanish), thus showing the tendency of the use of politeness strategies in both cultures.

1. Negative politeness in the first encounter conversations

1.1. Theoretical background

One of my hypotheses is that English-speaking people use more *negative* politeness during first encounter conversations; in the Peninsular Spanish film, on the other hand, these are not the dominant strategies. In order to begin analysing *negative* politeness strategies in the first encounter conversations in *LA* and *VASQNEP* it is essential to understand how *negative* politeness is seen and presented by Brown and Levinson [1987].

First of all, it is crucial to define the concept of *face*, which is the central element of the whole model of politeness. *Negative face* is defined as “the want of every competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by other” [Brown & Levinson 1987: 62]. This

strongly suggests that every person wants not to be imposed upon and that his/her freedoms to be unhindered.

Negative politeness is a redressive action that is directly addressed to *negative face* and is employed in order to minimise the effects of the acts (e.g. requests, suggestions, reminders, etc.) that threaten it. Since there is a great number of *negative face* threatening acts (*negative FTAs*) [Brown & Levinson 1987: 65-66], Brown and Levinson propose a variety of *negative* politeness strategies, which suggest being direct, not assuming, not coercing, communicating S's want not to impose upon H, redressing other wants of H's, thus satisfying H's want not to be impinged upon [Brown & Levinson 1987: 131]. All these strategies are further subdivided and will be elaborated on in case a particular *negative* politeness strategy is found in first encounter conversations under analysis.

In addition, it should be mentioned that *negative* politeness is one of the most successful forms of 'social distancing'; thus, *negative* politeness strategies are used by speakers when they intend to maximise social distance in the conversation [Brown & Levinson 1987: 130].

Finally, Brown and Levinson claim that *negative* politeness is what people in Western cultures employ in their interactions, and they emphasise that English-speaking culture uses *negative* politeness in its most elaborate form as a 'conventionalised set of linguistic strategies' [Brown & Levinson 1987: 130].

1.2. *Love Actually* (LA)

In the British English film *Love Actually* 76 strategies of *negative* politeness have been found, which constitute the majority of the overall number of different strategies employed in the film (for the frequency of the strategies see Appendix A).

It appears that the most commonly used strategy of *negative* politeness is the one of hedging (34 instances out of 76) since almost all the characters in the film employ this strategy for several different reasons. Brown and Levinson [1987: 145] define a hedge as follows:

[...] a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of the membership that it is *partial*, or true only in certain respects, or that it is *more* true and complete than perhaps might be expected'.

Most of the time, hedges have been used in the form of hesitation, where S tries to state something more indirectly. This type of hedges can be used for asking to elaborate more on something that has been previously said as in example (1), showing agreement as in (2) and (3) or softening disagreement as in (4):

- (1) *Er, er*, what?
- (2) *Erm*, all right.
- (3) *Er*, yes.
- (4) *Er*, no.

Then, *actually*, that performs the function of hedging, has two aspects: contrastive and emphatic [Brinton 2004: 98]. For example:

- (5) By the way, he introduced me as John *but actually* everyone calls me Jack.
- (6) Stepdad, *actually*.

Here in (5) a contrastive aspect is seen as S expresses the opposition between what has just been uttered and what is going to be said. On the other hand, S in (6) tries to explain the situation and correct the answer using the emphatic *actually*.

Furthermore, a number of examples with *really* has been found. For instance:

- (7) Not *really*, Mike.
- (8) No, no, *really*, it wasn't.

In example (7) *really* functions as a weakener of impolite direct answer *no*. On the other hand, in (8) it introduces a sincerity hedge, which draws H's attention to the fact that S is sincere, thus the whole utterance should be perceived as trustworthy.

There are also hedges that introduce a change of topic in the conversation, thus partially apologising for it. This type includes *by the way*, *anyway*:

- (9) I'm Colin, *by the way*.
- (10) *Anyway*, how can we help, sir?

Other hedges that have been not as widely used are adverbial-clause hedge *in fact*:

- (11) *In fact*, I am.

and *sort of*, which is used in order to deny responsibility for the truth of what has been said, thus making the utterance more vague:

- (12) ... I *sort of* brought my sister to stay.

Also, a strategy of giving deference, mainly using the address form *sir*, has been found in a number of utterances. This strategy indicates that "H is of higher social status than S", who humbles himself/herself [Brown & Levinson 1987: 178]:

- (13) Morning, *sir*.
- (14) Certainly, *sir*.
- (15) Please, *sir*, please.

In further analysis of the British English film, a *negative* politeness strategy which helps to realise both S's desire to state something directly and in the same time redress this desire, *i.e.* being conventionally indirect, has been found. Thus, the utterance is *on record*, while S shows his intent to go *off record* [Brown & Levinson 1987: 132]. For example:

- (16) *Would* you like it gift wrapped?
- (17) I'd *like* a Budweiser, *please*.
- (18) Look, *could* we be quite quick?
- (18²) *Could* we be quite quick, *please*?

In this strategy various words or phrases can be used, however, in the corpus there have been only a few examples, most of which are presented above. In (16) S conveys the question indirectly, thus showing his desire not to impose upon H. In (17) a similar example is presented with the phrase *would like* accompanied by *please*, which in this case functions as part of the strategy of being conventionally indirect (another use of *please* will be illustrated later). In this example S shows his intention to go *off record* rather than stating his/her want

directly (cf. *I want a Budweiser* or *Give me a Budweiser*). Furthermore, an interesting shift in S's utterances can be observed in (18) and (18²). The former utterance includes not only the modal *could* but also the direct *look* (*bald on record* technique will be discussed in detail in Section 3), whereas the latter conveys the message with a higher degree of indirectness, using both *could* and *please*.

In addition to the most frequently used strategies, there have been some other (minimising the imposition, apologising and incurring a debt) that are worth mentioning. The strategy of minimising the imposition suggests that in order to reduce the extent of imposition and show that the degree of it is not great, some particular expressions such as *just*, *little*, *couple of*, *a drop*, *a tiny bit*, etc. and other words that imply minimising the imposition are used. For instance:

- (19) Let me *just pop* it in the box.
- (20) Ready in the *flashiest of flashes*.
- (21) *Just a moment...*

In all these examples the degree of imposition is somehow minimised. In (19) two ways of signalling minimisation are found: the adverb *just*, which delimits the extent of the FTA [Brown & Levinson 1987: 177], and the verb *pop*, whose meaning suggests minimising the imposition, i.e. to put quickly. In (20) and (21) a true meaning of the utterances is hidden for in both cases the activity would take several minutes and definitely more than a moment or flash.

The strategy of apologising consisted of S begging H's forgiveness and using *sorry*:

- (22) ... I'm *sorry*.

The last strategy found in the British English film is that of going *on record* as incurring a debt. There have been only a few examples, however, those analysed have showed an interesting tendency as in all of them *please* functioned as the only signal (though not very strong) for S's claiming indebtedness to H:

- (23) Are you singing carols?
Er, no. No, I'm not.
Please, sir, *please*.

As has been shown, the majority of strategies found in the British English film *Love Actually* have been those of *negative* politeness. In the following sub-section the strategies of *negative* politeness will be analysed in the Peninsular Spanish film, where a totally different picture will be presented.

1.3. *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto (VASQNEP)*

In the Peninsular Spanish film *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto* the strategies of *negative* politeness are not as frequently employed (47 instances) as in the British English film (for the frequency of the strategies see Appendix B). However, there is a clear difference in the distribution of the strategies and one strategy that has not been found in the British English film has appeared here.

In the majority of instances (23 out of 47) the strategy of giving deference has been found. In comparison with the English language, in Spanish it is much easier to show and understand the way S claims his inferiority to H for in the language there is a system of

honorifics, i.e. the 3rd person singular or plural pronouns, *Usted* or *Ustedes*, possessive pronoun *su*, the pronouns *le* and *les* (when referring to *Usted* or *Ustedes*, respectively), as well as the inflections of the verbs that indicate H's superiority [Brown & Levinson 1987: 178-179; VOX, 2006]. For example:

- (24) ¿Traduce *usted* lo que *le* dice el acusado o sólo traduce lo que *le* da la gana?
 (Do you (3rd p. sg.)³ translate what the accused says to you (3rd p. sg.) or only what you (3rd p. sg.) want?)⁴
- (25) ¿Qué *quieren* tomar?
 (What would you (3rd p. pl.) like to drink?)
- (26) ... ¿*usted* está en la cola?
 (... are you (3rd p. sg.) in the queue?)

These examples show that in order to give deference the honorifics in the form of *Usted* or the verb inflections are employed. Examples (24) and (26) present the singular pronoun *Usted*, the pronoun *le* in (24), which functions as an indirect object, and the inflections of the verbs. However, in (25) there is no pronoun and only the inflection of the verb shows that S give deference to Hs, as the verb in the 3rd person plural means that the 3rd person plural pronoun is referred to in the utterance.

Furthermore, in the film there have been some other examples of the same strategy:

- (27) Voy a la esencia, *señoría*.
 (The essence, *Your Honour*.)
- (28) A ver, *caballero*...
 (Well, *gentleman*...)
- (29) Hola buenas noches, *señor* agente.
 (Hello, good evening, *sir* agent.)

In example (27) there is an extract from the scene in the court, thus, deference is given in the form of the conventional word *señoría*, while in (28) and (29) S chooses to humble himself using *caballero* and *señor*, thus stating that H has a higher status than himself.

Further analysis showed that Peninsular Spaniards tend to use the strategy of apologising to a greater extent than the British and use several ways. For instance:

- (30) *Perdona, lo siento*...
 (Sorry, *I'm sorry*...)

As it can be seen, mainly two forms are used in order to apologise: *perdona* and *lo siento* as in (30), both meaning almost the same, only the latter seems to introduce a state of being *more* sorry for *perdona* stands for “begging for forgiveness”, while the verb *sentir* means “lament something”.

In contrast to the British, it has been observed that Spaniards use fewer indirect requests and hedges. When employing the strategy of being conventionally indirect Spaniards tend to soften *on record* desire, putting a statement in the Present Simple tense in a question form, which functions as Future Simple in requests and questions about some decisions or future plans most of the time [Sánchez Lobato & García Fernández 1999: 96], for example:

³ When *you* is used in a polite form in 3rd person singular (Sp. *Usted*) and 3rd person plural (Sp. *Ustedes*), 3rd p. sg. and 3rd p. pl. is indicated in parenthesis, respectively.

⁴ The translation of this and subsequent utterances has been made by the author of the present paper.

- (31) ... ¿me *apartas* el coche?
(Will you move the car?)
- (32) ... ¿Me *invitas* a una copa?
(Will you buy me a drink?)

Both examples show the use of Present Simple referring to some future intentions. Thus in English these utterances are in Future Simple, which comparing to the examples from *LA* (where *would* was used) suggests a lower degree of conventionalisation.

As far as hedges are concerned, in *VASQNEP* several different strategies have been found:

- (33) No te había visto, *la verdad*.
(I haven't seen you, *really*.)
- (34) ... *supongo* que porque soy cojo.
I *suppose* because I'm lame.

As well as in British English, *la verdad* functions as a sincerity hedge, by using which S wants H to believe that what has been said is right. In (34) *supongo* stands for the hedge addressed to the Quality Maxim [Brown & Levinson 1987: 164], i.e. S does not take full responsibility for the utterance.

Other examples of *negative* politeness include the strategies of being pessimistic (35), minimising imposition (36) and going *on record* as incurring in debt (36):

- (35) Venga, cuenta, que sí.
(Come on, tell me, yeah.)
No te quiero aburrir, que no, que no.
(I don't want to make you bored, no, no.)
- (36) ... tus amigos pueden empujarlo *un poco*, os lo *agradecería*.
(... your friends can push it *a little bit*, I would be grateful.)

In (35) the second utterance shows a clear example of non-imposition as S presupposes that something could be boring to H, thus by producing the utterance S expresses doubt about the appropriateness of his utterance and gives H a way out to refuse to listen to S. In (36) two different strategies are found: the one minimising the imposition, namely *un poco*, and the other of incurring in debt. Not like in the examples from *LA*, here this strategy is used in its full form, directly stating the indebtedness to Hs (os lo *agradecería*).

Having analysed *negative* politeness in both films, it can be claimed that there are some similarities in both films; however, the differences are much more apparent from the examples illustrated. They will be discussed in greater detail in the next Section, where *positive* politeness strategies will be presented and the analysis of the examples will reveal some new tendencies.

2. Positive politeness in the first encounter conversations

2.1. Theoretical background

The hypothesis that the Spanish-speaking society tends to apply *positive* politeness strategies in first encounter conversations follows the traditional view (as have been discussed in the Introduction) that Spaniards are more concerned with H's *positive face*, while the

British respect individuality and non-imposition, which has been showed in the previous Section.

Positive politeness consists of a number of techniques addressed to the addressee's *positive face*, i.e. a desire that wants, actions, values of the addressee should be desirable and approved. A redressive action in *positive* politeness is communicated by the fact that S indicates that his/her wants are similar to those of H.

Brown & Levinson [1987: 101] suggest that *positive* politeness is referred to as the "normal linguistic behaviour between intimates". However, later they specify that an element of exaggeration distinguishes that kind of behaviour from *positive* politeness redress. This exaggeration then results in insincerity to some extent, as in "How absolutely marvellous!", but it is compensated by the fact that S intends to show that his/her want to preserve H's *positive face* is sincere. As Hickey, L. and M. Stewart [2005] suggest, *positive* politeness strategies tend to prevail in the Mediterranean cultures, for example Spanish, as for Spaniards it is crucial to preserve H's *positive face*, thus indicating S's want to be closer to H.

Positive politeness is divided into many strategies (claiming that H's wants are interesting, in-group membership with H, common ground, knowledge, reciprocity, etc.) suggested by Brown & Levinson [1987: 102], all of which comprise mitigating devices in order to minimise the threat to H's *positive face*.

In this section the analysis of the instances, in which *positive* politeness strategies were found, in the British English and the Peninsular Spanish films is provided.

2.2. *Love Actually (LA)*

In the British English film a variety of *positive* politeness strategies have been found, namely 12 out of 15 strategies suggested by Brown & Levinson (for the distribution of the strategies see Appendix C). Moreover, almost all the strategies have been illustrated by more than two examples and the majority of them (12 out of 51) has comprised the strategy of claiming in-group membership with H.

This prevailing strategy of using in-group identity markers suggests that using particular address forms, ellipsis, dialect, jargon (the former two were found in the film) S claims common ground with H. For example:

- (37) Not really, *Mike*.
- (38) It's the school Christmas concert, you see, *David*.
- (39) Ever do weddings?
- (40) Looking for anything in particular, sir?

In example (37) the use of contracted forms of the full name is observed, which functions as a gesture of in-group solidarity (cf. in the same conversation "That's not me, *Michael*"). This contracted form seems to endear H indicating to some extent the 'the association with smallness', whereas, as has been noted, in *negative* politeness S tends to somehow increase 'the size of H' [Brown & Levinson 1987: 112]. In (38), though, the absence of the contracted form suggests the use of the first name instead of a title, as *David* is the Prime Minister, who should be addressed as *Prime Minister* by people (as in this conversation) having less power than he has (cf. "Aren't you *the Prime Minister*?" uttered by the character in the same situation as S in (38) and not "Aren't you *David*?"). In addition, ellipsis, which also functions as an in-group marker, is seen in examples (39) and (40). This marker suggests in-group mutual knowledge between S and H, thus the use of ellipsis marks the whole utterance (or a part of it, as in (40)) as informal and *positively* polite. In (40) the first part of the utterance is

perceived as *positively* polite only due to the use of ellipsis, which marks even conventionally indirect requests with a feature of *positive* politeness [Brown & Levinson 1987: 112].

Also, in the British film characters tend to seek agreement and avoid disagreement. These strategies in this paper are merged and constitute another strategy of *positive* politeness. They allow S to show his/her agreement with H or at least pretend to agree, thus minimising the threat to H's *positive face*.

- (41) You're Sam's dad, *aren't you*?
- (42) Yes, I did, *but...*
- (43) So that's a no, *then*?
- (44) And that's not you?
That's not me, Michael.

In (41) agreement is sought by using a question tag, which, to some extent, forces H to agree with what has just been uttered. (42) illustrates an example of a token agreement, where S appears to agree and at the same time hide his/her disagreement. It is also possible to try to avoid disagreement using pseudo-agreement technique, where *then* and *so* play the role of conclusory markers which point to some agreement between S and H. Example (43) presents the use of both *then* and *so* which in this case lead to a fake conclusion, as there was no prior agreement between S and H. The last example of seeking agreement shows a technique of repetition, which demonstrates agreement with what has been previously said. Thus, in (44) H repeats the entire question in his answer, which also suggests emotional agreement [Brown & Levinson 1987: 112-115].

Furthermore, in order to claim common ground the strategy of noticing, attending to H (also conveying that H is admirable, interesting) is employed in a number of utterances. For instance:

- (45) ... I *very much* like the look of you.
- (46) I heard you were *gorgeous*.
- (47) Food?
No, *thanks*.

Examples (45) and (46) illustrate the fact that S has noticed some aspects of H, who wants his/her wants, need, interests to be noticed. As a result, S using *gorgeous* and *very much* shows his/her notice and approves of H's appearance. In (47) H uses *thanks* in order to soften a threat to S's *positive face* by only saying "No". Thus, I suggest that here *thanks*, following a negative direct *No*, conveys that S is *still* admirable or interesting to H, thus mitigating the impact of a negative reply.

Another basic *positive* politeness technique, namely joking, seems to be used quite frequently in British English, as it makes H feel more relaxed, especially in situations where he/she is nervous.

- (48) *Ah, right, it should be a lot easier with me than with the last lot: no nappies, no teenagers, no scary wife.*
- (49) ... And now I've gone and said 'shit'.
... *You could've said 'fuck' and we'd have been in real trouble.*

Both examples are uttered by the Prime Minister talking to his staff for the first time. Using the strategy of joking he intends to put both Hs at ease and reduce the tension. In (48) S indicates his knowledge of H's wants. Also, in (49) the Prime Minister jokes in order to

relieve an already increased tension and preserve H's *positive face*, which in this case is extremely vulnerable and could be easily threatened.

In order to show cooperation between S and H the strategy of including both S and H in the activity, i.e. an inclusive *we* is employed. In the film *we* stands either for *you*, as in (18), or for *I*, as in (50):

- (50) ... *we're* going to pop it in the Christmas box.

Examples (51) and (52) introduce the strategy of presupposing/raising/asserting common ground, namely point-of-view operations.

- (51) It's the school Christmas concert, *you see*, David.
(52) *Here*, aren't... Aren't you the Prime Minister?

(51) presents a case of personal-centre switch from S to H, where as Brown & Levinson [1987: 119] suggest S speaks as if H were S and presupposes that her knowledge is equal to that of H. In fact, David has no idea about the school Christmas concert, but S using *you see* claims "H's knowledge of that kind of situation in general" [Brown & Levinson 1987: 120]. In (52) a place switch could be observed, where a more proximal demonstrative *here* is used rather than a distal one. Although H has more power, S decides to use this special deixis, which in this case is employed in a rather polite use.

Another common feature of *positive* politeness in conversations is to intensify the interest of S's utterances, which would make them worth listening to. For example see (5), where S tries to receive H's attention, thus making a good story. In (53) S uses a vivid description with the exaggeration, which stresses the sincerity of the utterance and should attract H's interest:

- (53) *Looks like a dead baby's finger. Oooh. Oh. Tastes like it, too.*

The technique of exaggeration is not only associated with intensifying the interest, but also functions on its own. Most of the time it is done with exaggerated intonation, stress, intensifying modifiers or an exclamation mark at the end of the utterance:

- (54) It's *brilliant!*
(55) That is *so much more* than a bag.

Finally, the strategies of promising, giving gifts to H in the form of understanding or sympathy and being optimistic were found:

- (56) You *won't regret* it, sir.
(57) I'm so sorry, sir.
It's fine.
(58) *I hope we'll meet again, Karen.*

(56) demonstrates S and H's cooperation, where S will try to obtain whatever H wants, and S's intentions to satisfy H's *positive face*. In (57) S indicates that he/she knows that H wants to be liked, understood, listened to, etc., thus S shows his understanding in saying *It's fine* after H's apology. An utterance like (58) claims mutual S and H's interest as well as a tacit cooperation; as a result, S chooses to be optimistic about future actions.

As can be seen from the examples mentioned above, a variety of *positive* politeness strategies is employed in the British English film. In the following sub-section the same

strategies will be analysed in the Peninsular Spanish film and a slightly different picture will be presented.

2.3. *Va a ser que nadie es perfecto (VASQNEP)*

In the Peninsular Spanish film *positive* politeness plays a crucial role in conversations for the entire culture is characterised as *positively* polite. As in the British English film, almost all the strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson are present in the film; however, the prevailing ones, which attract attention with the striking 33 and 19 instances (out of 76), are claiming in-group membership with H and seeking agreement/avoiding disagreement, respectively (for the distribution of the strategies see Appendix D).

On the one hand, as in British English, the strategy of claiming in-group membership, by using in-group markers, is the most prominent in Peninsular Spanish. On the other hand, unlike in British English, there is a wide range of different in-group markers such as *tío*, *guapa*, *chavales*, *bonita*, *cariño*, *majo*, *nene*, *hombre*, etc. in Peninsular Spanish. Here are some examples:

- (59) ¡Qué pesada eres, *hija mía*!
(How annoying you are, *my daughter*!)
- (60) ¿Pero qué haces, *tío*?
(But what are you doing, *bloke*?)
- (61) Perdona, *bonita*...
(Excuse me, *pretty*.)
- (62) Fuera el coche, *cariño*.
(Away! the car, *dear*.)

It is important to mention, though, that sometimes this strategy of using in-group markers and claiming solidarity fails; as a result the *positive face* of S is threatened. For example, in the answer to (61) H utters: “No me llamo ‘bonita’” (“‘Pretty’ is not my name”).

Then the strategy of seeking agreement/avoiding disagreement is very frequently used in the film. For instance:

- (63) ¿Todo te sabe igual?
(Does everything taste the same to you?)
Todo.
(*Everything*.)
- (64) Te molesta?
(Does it bother you?)
No, pero...
(*No, but...*)
- (65) Será David, ¿no?
(It will be David, *won't it*?)
- (65²) *No. David*.
(*No. David*.)
- (66) Al final la parejita, ¿no?
(After all, a couple, *isn't it*?)
- (66²) *Sí, al final la parejita*, majo.
(*Yes, after all the couple*, handsome.)
- (67) Tía, tú no te enteras, ¿no?
(Chick, you don't get, *do you*?)

- Tampoco me llamo ‘tía’, ¿eh?
 (Neither my name is ‘chick’, eh?)
 (67²) Mira, verás.
 (Look, you’ll see.)

In (63) an example of agreement by repetition is seen. H repeats part of the previous utterance, thus agreeing with S. A token agreement, also found in British English, is illustrated in (64), although it shows not the positive *Yes*, *but* as in most cases, but the negative *No*, *pero* since “No” is the only polite answer to a preceding utterance. However, H wants to hide his disagreement and decides to redress his action by using token agreement technique. In examples (65), (66) and (67) a very common way of seeking agreement is presented, i.e. the use of *no* at the end of the interrogative sentence, which suggests that either a affirmative response or the confirmation of what has been uttered is expected [VOX 2006] and this kind of *no* functions as an English question tag [Fernández 2005]. This technique is peculiar because the same word *no* is employed in both negative and positive utterances as in (65) and (66), but it has the same impact on H and leads him to the agreement with what has been said (though not always – cf. (65²) and (67²)). Also, it seems that if there is no direct answer (*sí* or *no*) to *¿no?*, it also shows agreement to what has been stated before. It is seen in (66) and (66²) since H neither disagrees nor agrees, paying attention to other element in the utterance; consequently, this signals the agreement and S continues talking as if the answer were an agreement.

Furthermore, the strategy of attending to H, though not so abundant in instances as the first two, is employed in the Peninsular Spanish. In example (68) *thanks* functions as a part of the strategy of noticing some new aspects of H for S decides to approve of what H has done for him (though it is something ordinary) as well as comments on a presumably noticeable change in H’s appearance.

- (68) *Gracias. Un peinado muy bonito.*
 (Thanks. Your hairstyle is very beautiful.)
 (69) ... eres la chica *más guapa* de la disco.
 (... you are *the most beautiful* girl at the disco.)

In addition, it is essential to analyse the strategy of assuming reciprocity since it has only been found in the Peninsular Spanish film. This strategy points to cooperation and to reciprocal rights of doing FTAs. In both examples below it is assumed that S tends to cooperate with H and is ready to reciprocate H’s actions, thus providing some benefit for H.

- (70) *Si nos cuentas qué te ha pasado, te quitamos el coche.*
 (If you tell us what has happened to you, we will move the car.)
 (71) *La quitaré cuando haga la llamada.*
 (I will take it off when you make a call.)

Finally, the remaining *positive* politeness strategies, those of exaggerating, intensifying interest to H, presupposing common knowledge, joking, offering, including both S and H in the activity and giving gifts to H, were exemplified only by one or two instances in the film.

The most valuable and interesting examples are the following:

- (72) *Ya, más os gustaría, chavales.*
 (Sure, you would like that, mates.)
 (73) *Ya sabes, aquí la gente va muy “ciega”.* (dice el ciego)

- (*You know, here people go very 'blind'.*) (the blind man says)
- (74) ... ¿vamos a tomar algo?
(... *let's drink something?*)
- (75) Venga, yo te invito.
(Come on, *I invite you.*)
- (76) Nadie quiere comer mis comidas.
(No one wants to eat my dishes.)
Bueno, a mí me pasa un poco igual, que como no veo, no sé si las cosas me quedan muy crudas o muy hechas.
(*Well, something similar happens to me, as I don't see, I don't know when something (I prepare) is raw or well-done.*)
- (77) ¡Hostia! ¡Vaya cuádriceps!
(*Jeez! What quadriceps!*)
- (78) Tengo el partido el que va a tocar. *Hoy lo he soñado.*
(I have winning lottery tickets. *Today I have dreamt about that.*)

In example (72) S presupposes that she knows what Hs want and in the utterance claims it. The joke (73) could be a joke only in a specific situation, the one when it is uttered by the blind man as in the example, where S makes a joke about his disability. In addition, the strategy of including both S and H in the activity as in (74) using *let's* is followed by an offer (75), which is used in order to redress a potential threat of FTA and claim that S can give whatever H wants. Then, example (76) illustrates a long utterance, where H presents a similar situation to that of S, thus satisfying S's want to be understood. The exaggerative use of words and intensifying modifiers as well as intonation are employed in (77) in order to show that H is admirable to S. And the last strategy (78) found in the Peninsular Spanish film suggests intensifying interest and making it worth listening to S or, especially in this case, leading H to the decision to buy lottery tickets.

Taking all the examples into consideration, it could be claimed that some *positive* politeness strategies adopted in Peninsular Spanish are very frequently used. However, it is true that the majority of them are only employed in a few cases in the film.

3. Bald on record in first encounter conversations

3.1. Theoretical background

The hypothesis about *bald on record* technique claims that it is very uncommon or even inappropriate in first encounter conversations. However, this claim has been partially refuted by the analysis of the examples.

Bald on record technique is used when S wants FTA to be as effective as possible and S's desire is to attend to neither of H's *faces*. There are two cases when *bald on record* technique is used. The first one includes occasions when *face* is irrelevant, thus no *face* redress is necessary, e.g. urgency (*Help me!*), doing FTA is in H's interest (*Careful! He's a dangerous man*) or S is superior in power to H (*Be quiet* – teacher to pupil). The other case comprises welcomings (*Come in*), farewells (*Go*) and offers (*Have another cake*) [Brown & Levinson 1987: 95-100]. As Brown and Levinson mention, direct imperatives are clear cases of *bald on record* strategy, thus the majority of example in all languages consist of their use, which will also be seen in British English and Peninsular Spanish.

3.2. LA and VASQNEP

In the British English film *bald on record* techniques are very uncommon and very few examples have been found:

- (79) *Look*, I don't need a bag.
- (80) *Leave* it.
- (81) *No bloody holly*.

These three cases have been found in the same conversation between a customer and a salesman. In (79) imperative is used in order to emphasise a point, while in (80) S allows himself to employ this technique because his positions as a customer is superior in power to that of a salesman. Furthermore, example (81) does not include a direct imperative, though a direct request or order can be observed from the example, which would be equivalent to an imperative "Don't put holly".

In Peninsular Spanish *bald on record* strategy is very frequent (55 instances) and it is formed in a rather different way. For example:

- (82) *No le hagas* ni caso.
(Don't pay attention to him.)
- (83) *Perdona*.
(Excuse me.)
- (84) *Oye...*
(Look...)
- (84²) *Oiga...*
(Look...)

In Peninsular Spanish (82) is an example of non-honorific imperative, i.e. the one which is addressed to the second person singular pronoun (*tú*). In (83) a formulaic entreaty in Peninsular Spanish as well as its equivalent in British English is illustrated. Here *perdona* functions as *excuse me* since a person expresses his want to interrupt somebody and does not lament for something he has done (cf. *I'm really sorry* for interrupting you). In addition, examples (84) and (84²) clearly exemplify honorific and non-honorific uses of the imperative. The former is used to address the second person singular pronoun (*tú*), while the latter indicates the use of the third person singular (*Usted*), which is a honorific form in Peninsular Spanish.

From the examples, it is seen that in both languages *bald on record* technique is used in the form of direct imperative. However, in Peninsular Spanish imperative forms are divided into honorific and non-honorific.

4. Combined politeness strategies in the first encounter situations

According to Brown & Levinson [1987] *positive* and *negative* politeness exclude each other. This has been disproved by a number of studies. This research presents also a counterargument to the claim.

In the films four different combinations of the strategies (29 instances in total) have been found (for their distribution see Appendix E). Firstly, in both British English and Peninsular Spanish films a combination of *negative* politeness and *bald on record* technique was encountered. For example:

- (85) *Look, we're not actually flying.*
 (86) *Vaya, oye, perdona, que no lo sabía ...*
 (Oh, *look, sorry*, I didn't know that...)

In these examples, the imperative mood indicates *bald on record* techniques. Moreover, in (85) *negative* politeness in the form of hedge and in (86) in the form of apologising are indicated.

Also, a combination of *positive* politeness and *bald on record* techniques could be illustrated by the following examples from the Peninsular Spanish film. In (87) and (88) the imperative mood serves as a *bald on record* technique, while the strategy of giving deference is used as a *positive* politeness marker:

- (87) *Cómprame claveles, mi alma.*
 (Buy carnations, my soul.)
 (88) *Mira, tío, tú entra, tú entra...*
 (Look, bloke, you enter, you enter...)

Furthermore, another combination of *negative* and *positive* politeness was found only in the British English film. For example see (5), (40) or the following utterance:

- (89) *Yeah, a bit dodgy, isn't it?*

Example (5) has been analysed in the sections dedicated to *negative* politeness, namely indicating the strategy of hedging, as well as to *positive* politeness, where it has been presented as the strategy of intensifying H's interest to the utterance. Moreover, example (40) shows *positive* politeness strategy of in-group markers and *sir* suggests the strategy of giving deference. In (89) two *positive* politeness strategies are used, those of seeking agreement and in-group markers (ellipsis), as well as the strategy of minimising, which marks this utterance as *negatively* polite.

Finally, the last combination consists of all three strategies, i.e. *negative* and *positive* politeness as well as *bald on record* techniques. The example is provided from the British English film and a part of it has been analysed in example (18) as *negative* politeness strategy of being conventionally indirect and as *positive* politeness strategy of including both S and H in the activity. Moreover, the imperative mood in *look* stands for *bald on record* technique.

This section shows that every possible combination has been found in the films, one of them in both films (*bald on record* and *negative* politeness), some examples only in the British English film (combinations of *negative* and *positive* politeness and that of *bald on record*, *negative* and *positive* politeness) and the remaining combination of *bald on record* and *positive* politeness in the Peninsular Spanish film.

4. Conclusions

This research has shown that in first encounter conversations the British tend to use more *negative* politeness strategies; however, there is a significant number of *positive* politeness strategies. As far as *bald on record* techniques are concerned, in the British English film they are almost absent. On the contrary, the Peninsular Spanish film has shown the tendency of the use of *positive* politeness in the majority of cases in the first encounter conversations.

Furthermore, it should be emphasised that *bald on record* techniques has been employed to the same extent as *negative* politeness strategies (for overall statistics see Appendix F and G). Thus, it can be held that two of the hypotheses have been totally and the third one partially proved. In addition, four possible combinations of the strategies have been found, which contradicts one of Brown and Levinson's claims.

However, the present investigation has been restricted to the analysis of first encounter conversations only. Moreover, due to the limited scope of the paper, a thorough analysis of the combinations has been impossible to carry out.

There are still questions that would require further research, e.g. it would be important to see the distribution of strategies in other situations (e.g. job interviews, favour asking, etc.) or compare other languages, as well as investigate the frequency and some particular tendencies of various combinations of politeness strategies.

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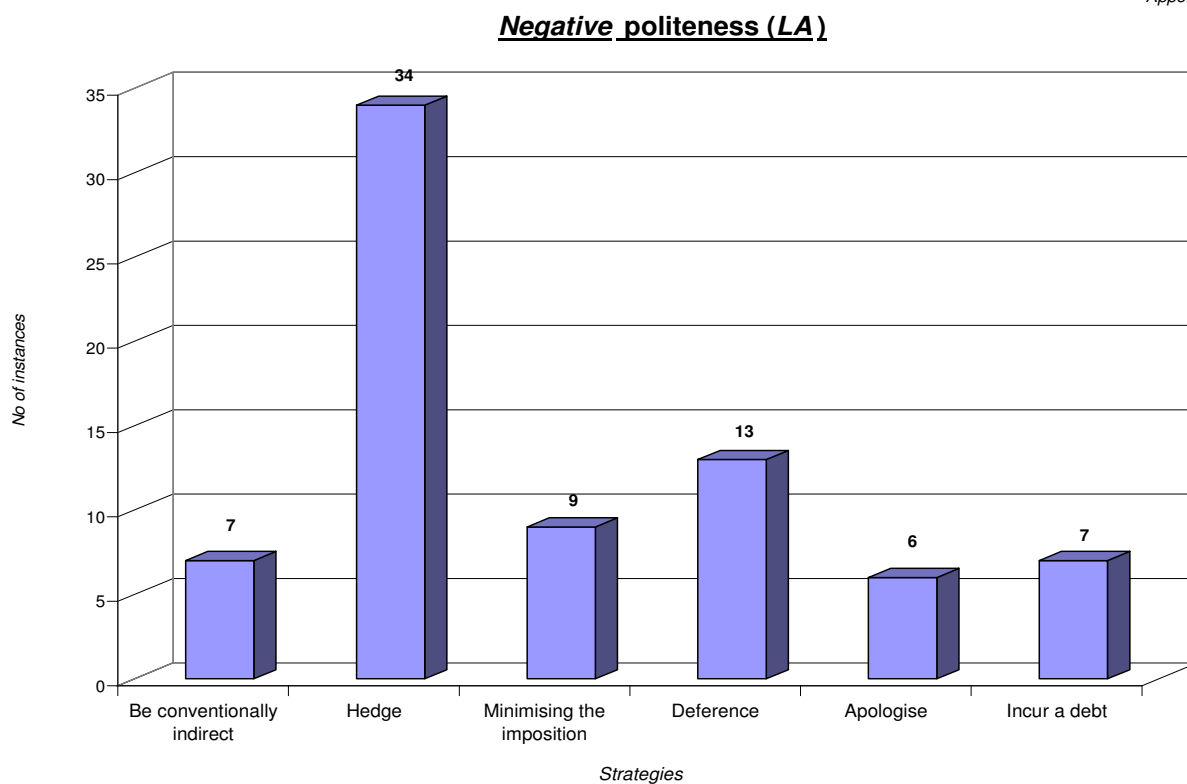
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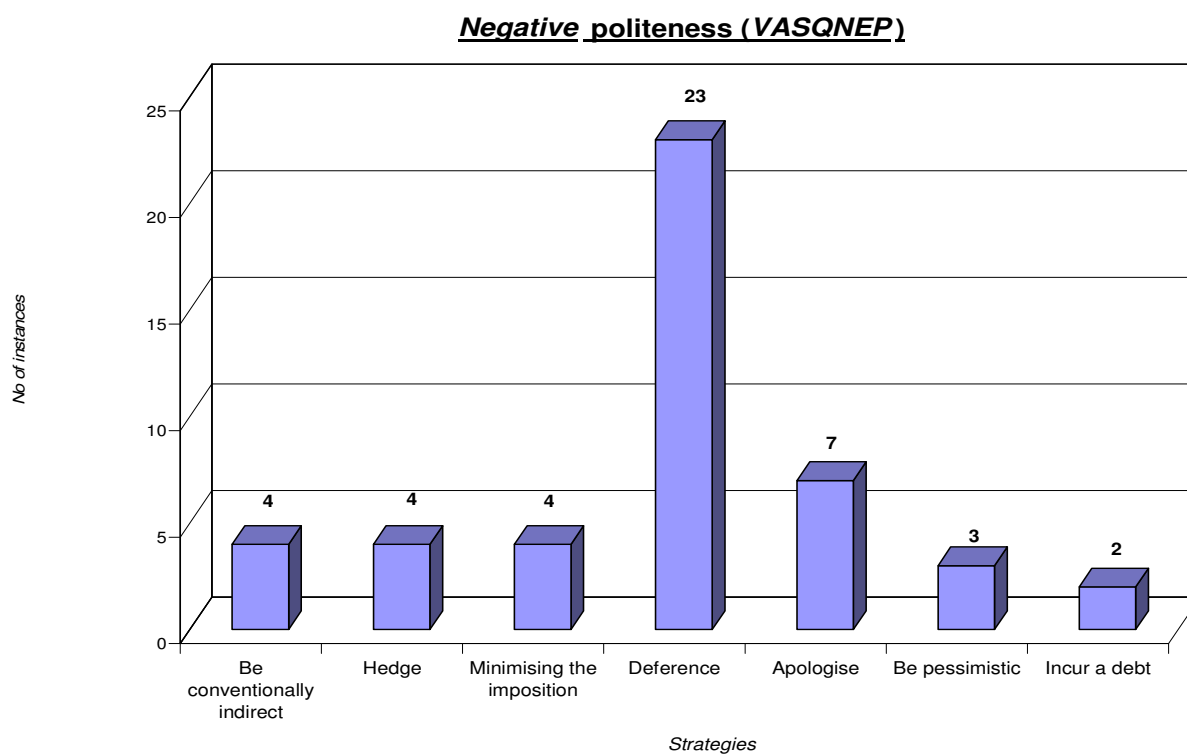
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Appendix

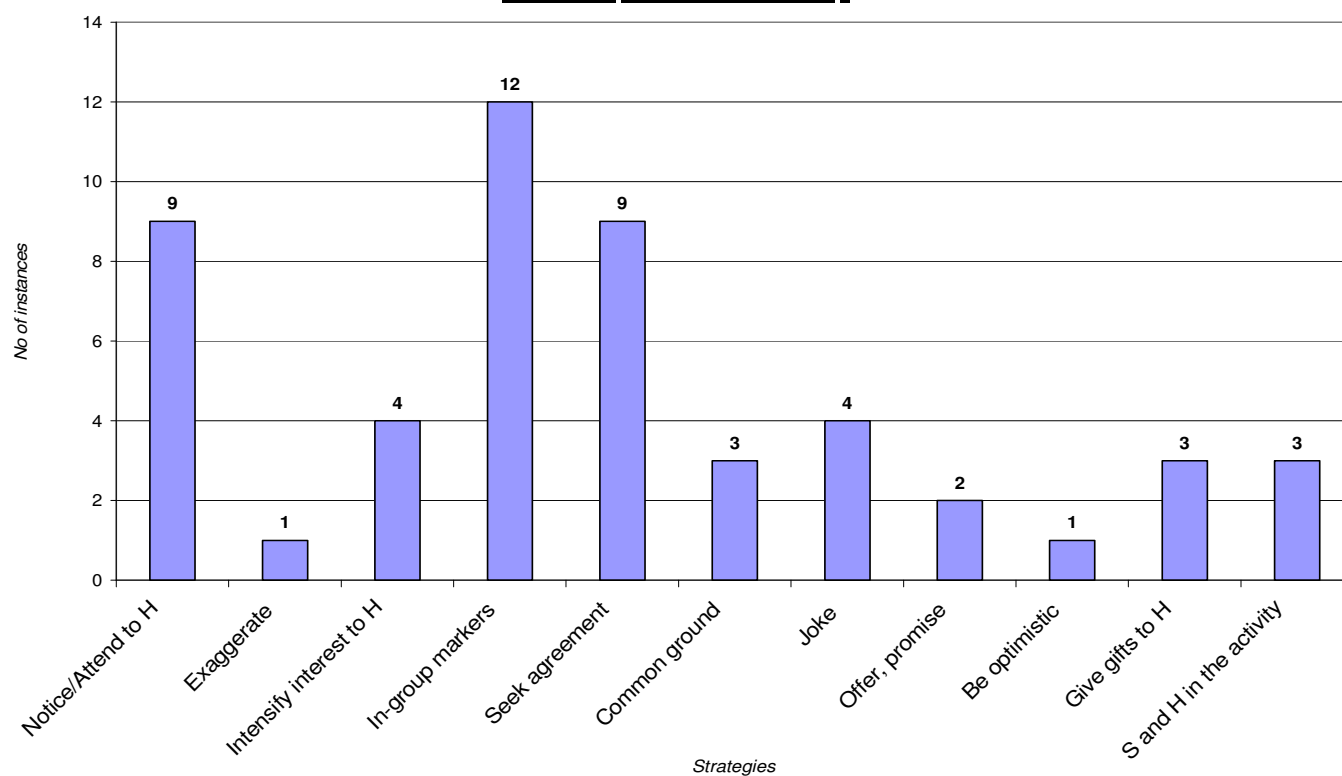
Appendix A



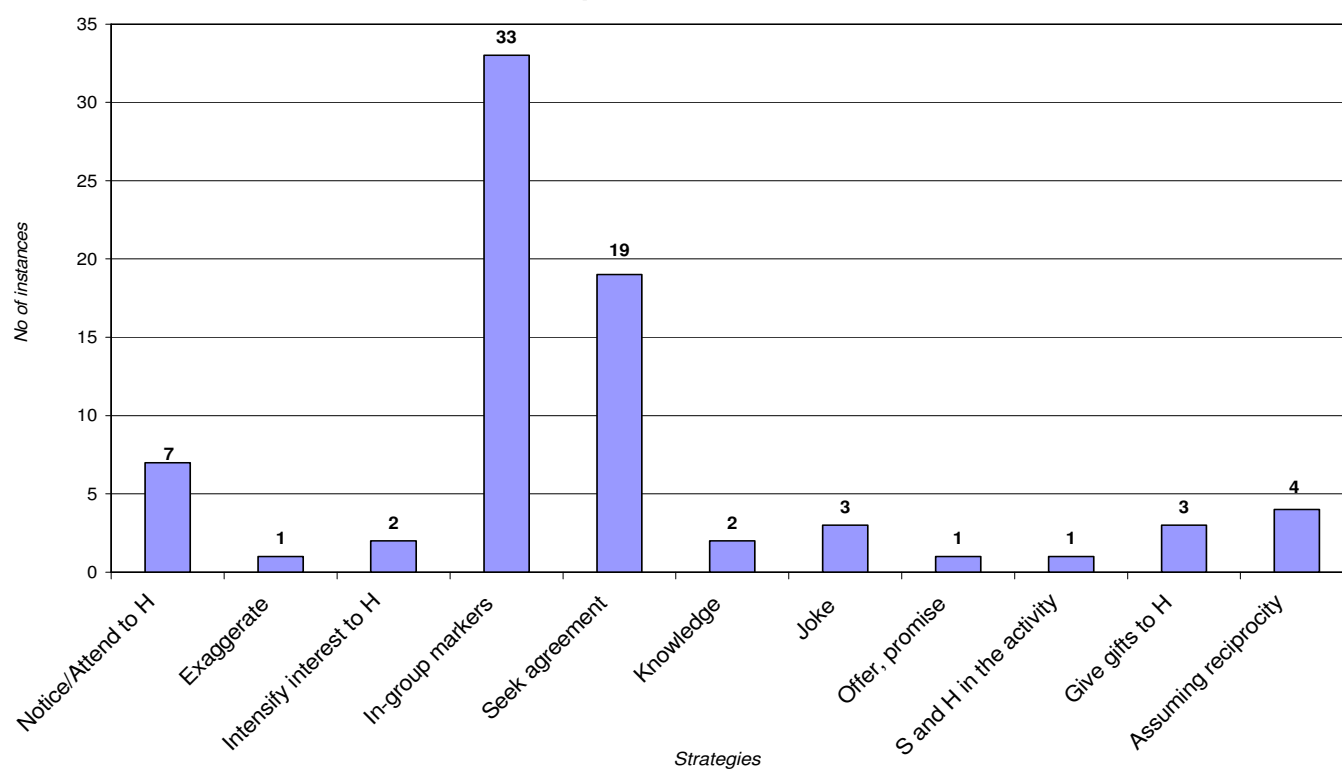
Appendix B



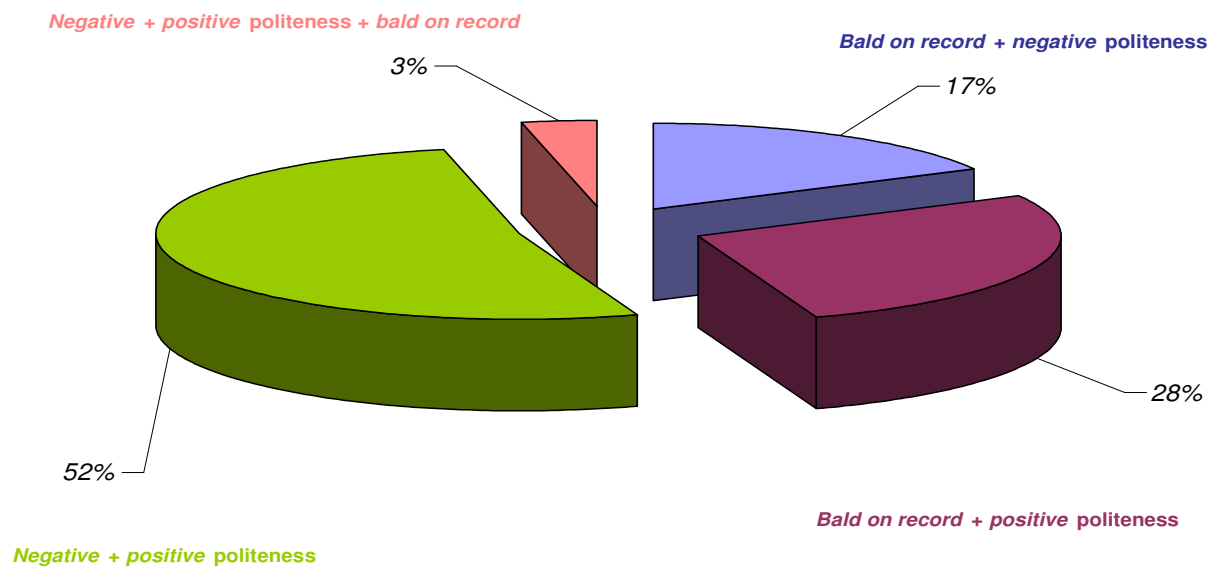
Appendix C

Positive politeness (LA)

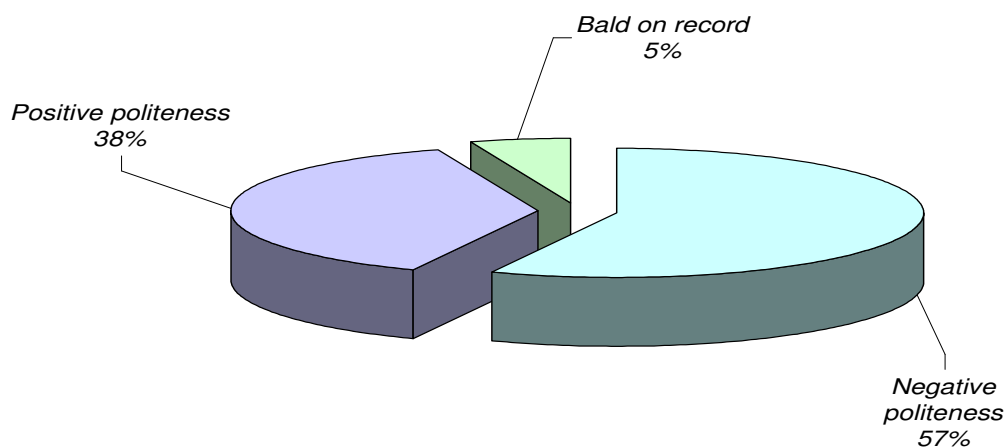
Appendix D

Positive politeness (VASQNEP)

Combined politeness strategies in LA and VASQNEP



LA on record politeness strategies



VASQNEP on record politeness strategies

